

REMARKS

Claims 1-10 were presented for examination. By the aforementioned Office Action, Claims 1-10 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a). Claims 1 and 6 were also rejected under 35 U.S.C 112.

By this Amendment, Claims 1 and 6 have been amended to more distinctly claim the subject matter which the Applicant regards as his invention. Claims 7-9 have been amended so that they correctly depend on Claim 6. No new matter has been added. Claims 1-10 are currently pending, and reconsideration of the Office Action is respectfully requested for the reasons set forth below.

1. Claim Rejections under 35 U.S.C 112

Claims 1 and 6 have been amended (see last two lines of the Claims) such that the term "substantially" has been removed. In addition, the term "high" has also been removed from Claim 6 as a result of the amendments.

The limitation "said deadline" as recited in Claims 1 and 6 has been amended to "said expected deadline".

Accordingly, Applicant submits that Claims 1 and 6 as currently amended distinctly claim the subject matter which he regards as his invention, and requests the Examiner to withdraw his rejections under 35 U.S.C 112.

2. Claim Rejections under 35 U.S.C. 103(a)

Claims 1-10 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Tarumi (US Patent No. 6,115,640).

Claim 1 relates to a method for managing a workflow process. A set of expected time to complete (ETC) values is generated for a corresponding set of priority levels for each work node of the workflow process. The ETC value denotes a cumulative time to complete the process, including the time taken by the corresponding work node to complete its activities at a selected priority level.

At each work node, a priority level is selected based on its ETC value. The activities at each work node are subsequently executed at the selected priority level.

Tarumi teaches a workflow system and a corresponding workflow management method. A workflow process is defined based on various conditions. The defined workflow process includes tasks, and each task may be assigned a priority level. The completion time of the workflow process is predicted to determine if a deadline for completing the process could be met. If the deadline could not be met based on the predicted completion time, the workflow process is re-arranged. Re-arranging of the workflow process includes extending the deadline or raising the priority levels of the tasks of the workflow process.

Applicant submits that Tarumi does not teach or suggest the step of “generating for each work node a set of expected time to complete (ETC) values for each priority level, ...” as recited in Claim 1. Tarumi only teaches the use of priority as one of the conditions for defining the workflow process (col 4, lines 10-33), and the priority levels of the tasks are raised if the deadline could not be met (col 3, lines 30-33 and col 5, lines 12-26). However, Tarumi does not teach the assigning of ETC values to any priority levels of the tasks of the workflow process as recited in Claim 1.

Applicant further submits that Tarumi does not teach or suggest the step of “selecting for each work node a priority level that has a corresponding ETC value....” as recited in Claim 1. As already mentioned above, the priority levels of each task according to Tarumi are not assigned any ETC values. Therefore, the priority levels for each tasks could not be selected based on ETC values.

Applicant would like to point out that Tarumi only mentioned how initial priority levels of the tasks were raised if the deadline is unlikely to be met, but does not teach nor suggest how the initial priority levels of the tasks were set or determined. Accordingly, Tarumi does not provide any motivation to assign ETC values to the priority levels of the tasks and to select an appropriate priority level for each task in order to meet the deadline according to Claim 1.

Furthermore, Tarumi teaches that the workflow process is first defined, and subsequently it is determined whether the deadline could be met by the defined workflow process. If it is determined that the deadline could not be met, the defined workflow process is modified (or re-arranged). Such a workflow management process of Tarumi is opposite to the method steps recited in Claim 1. According to Claim 1, the appropriate priority levels for each work node is first selected such that the deadline could be met by the workflow process when executed at the selected priority levels. Subsequently, the workflow process is executed at the selected priority level (or the workflow process is defined according to Tarumi). Therefore, a person skilled in the art, upon reading the teachings of Tarumi, would not be motivated to modify the teachings of Tarumi to arrive at the features of Claim 1.

Accordingly, the subject matters of Claim 1, and Claims 2-5 dependent therefore, are patentable over Tarumi. For the same reasons, the subject matters of Claim 6, and Claims 7-10 dependent thereof, are patentable over Tarumi.

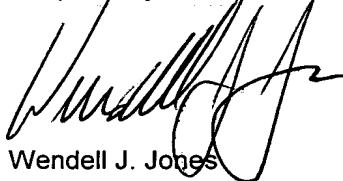
3. Conclusion

For the foregoing reasons, Applicant respectfully requests the Examiner to allow the pending Claims 1-10 and to issue a Notice of Allowance for the present application.

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Respectfully submitted,



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